

PREMIER KLEIN ON THE ROLE OF MANAGERS:

"Look, We're All on the Same Team"

CANADIANA

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The Alberta Public Service has seen rapid change over the past few years, not the least of which is the advent of a new Premier. Connexus interviewed Premier Ralph Klein on his perspectives, his priorities, and most importantly, his advice to managers in the Alberta government.

Interviewer: You've characterized your leadership as part of a new, more open government. Why do you think public consultation is so important?

Premier Klein: I think that governments have an obligation to develop policy in accordance with the thoughts of the people. In other words, what people think is right for them, and not what government thinks is right for them. It's a fundamental philosophy of democracy that the government is here to serve the people, to develop policy in accordance with their wishes.

Interviewer: What does a more open style of government really mean for managers in the Alberta Public Service?

Premier Klein: I think it means there's an opportunity for managers and people



ALBERTA PREMIER RALPH KLEIN

within the public service to communicate with me directly. That has happened. Yesterday, for example, I had two social workers in from the Whyte Avenue office to express their concerns about some of the operations. They were very candid and offered some constructive advice on how some more efficiencies could be achieved. And basically, that (open door) applies not only to the public service but to citizens at large.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on why you chose the new policy committee structure?

Premier Klein: It's the kind of structure that has been used quite effectively in the municipal government, which is a body of government that I always thought was much closer to the people. It's closer to the people because there are processes in place to allow for meaningful public input. And these committees are policy committees. Their role is to

develop policy and work that policy up through cabinet, and to the appropriate minister, but at the same time to allow for public input.

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Interviewer: What does the new committee structure mean for managers and for departments?

Premier Klein: They have all the right in the world to plug into the system, if they have something to offer. As a matter of fact, we're going through a process right now, with respect to the operating budgets of various departments, where instead of the ministers in charge of those departments presenting the cases, there is an examination of the managers and really the line people, with respect to the operation of various components of departments.

Interviewer: What do you see as the dominant trends ahead for this government?

Premier Klein: It's basically two things: getting our financial house in order and rationalizing government, and secondly, it's to bring forth an economic plan to stimulate economic growth and prosperity. And that plan now is coming together.

Interviewer: How do you, as Premier, set priorities?

Premier Klein: The priorities are those I talked about through the leadership campaign. One, as I mentioned, is getting our financial house in order, and setting for ourselves a goal of eliminating the deficit by the fiscal year 96/97. We want to achieve a schedule to take down the debt, with minimum disruption and full co-operation of the public service. That is one goal and we're working on that plan right now. And we have taken some steps to rationalize government and

achieve more productivity, efficiency and service improvement. And we started at the top. We've always said that we want to do this in a very humane way, and that massive layoffs and brutal cuts are not the way to go about it.

Interviewer: How do you expect managers to set priorities?

Premier Klein: They should really look sincerely at their own departments and how they are run, and determine for themselves how they can achieve more efficiency and service improvements. In other words, we've all got to get away from this notion that the bigger the budget, the better it is.



Interviewer: What do you see as the communications role of managers?

Premier Klein: That is to be good communicators with the people under them, to carry through the message that we as ministers have given the deputies. That message is that instead of finding new ways to regulate, and new laws to create, let's try to find ways to deregulate, to eliminate cumbersome laws that perhaps get in the way of business, school boards, hospital boards and municipi-

pal governments. Also, let's find ways to get together with other departments and other ministries to avoid overlap and duplication.

Interviewer: What is your view of the relationship between politicians and administration in the Alberta government?

Premier Klein: I sense that for the longest time there's been somewhat of a polarization between elected officials and the public service, including those who are in management positions. I think there's got to be much closer co-operation. Those in the public service have to be involved in developing the decision-making models. I think we've started that process. About a month and a half ago, we had the first meeting since 1982 between elected officials and deputies. And the message was that we're a team, that we're all working toward the same things, and it shouldn't be a "them/us" kind of situation.

Interviewer: Can you discuss some of the implications of the Early Voluntary Options program for managers?

Premier Klein: First, work with departing employees to make sure they receive a good transition into the workforce, private sector or retirement. At the same time, it's a golden opportunity for managers to seek advice on how the vacated positions may be accommodated without adding more staff. Have a good discussion with that employee as to what he or she feels might be done to achieve more efficiency in the vacant position.

Interviewer: What changes would you like to see in the budgetary system?

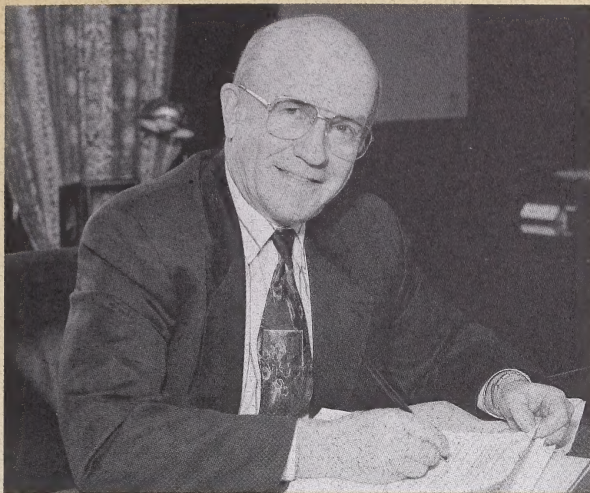
Premier Klein: There is a fundamental change I would like to see, and how it all sorts out specifically I really don't know. But the fundamental change is separating operating from capital. Right now everything is rolled into the general revenue. I would like to see a clear separation of capital expenditures from operating expenditures, and two sets of budget books, one for capital, one for operating. And indeed, that's what the Auditor General's report recommended.

Interviewer: If you had one minute to give managers one message, what would it be?

Premier Klein: The message would be: "Look, we're all on the same team." I feel extremely proud overall of the employees in the public service, including the managers and people on the line. If there is going to be a demonstration of the team approach, I'll be with them as much as I expect them to be with me. That's the way it was in my former department, Environment. I think you'll find it has pretty good morale.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Premier Klein: You're very welcome. ▲



VANCE MACNICHOL

A 'PEOPLE PERSON' AT THE TOP

Surprise. It's probably faster and easier to ring up Alberta's top public servant these days than it is to make a reservation at a popular restaurant or attempt to book a seat on an airline.

Vance MacNichol, appointed Deputy Minister of the Alberta Executive Council last December, has a penchant for answering his own phone — and an inclination toward informality. Most of the time, he doesn't even demand to know his caller's name. He just happens to think that listening is an important part of the job for every manager in the Alberta Public Service.

"We all have to do a lot more listening," says the unpretentious MacNichol, a trim 59-year-old professional engineer by training. "We have to make sure that we know

what the public really wants."

As head of the Alberta Executive Council, a position created in 1971, MacNichol is "the deputy minister of deputy ministers." He is a key adviser to cabinet, offering advice on policy and matters concerning the public service, and providing a crucial link between cabinet and departments through the deputy ministers.

An average day? Usually it starts early with a meeting with deputy premiers Peter Elzinga and Ken Kowalski and a couple of other ministers to go over pressing administrative issues. That may be followed by a second meeting with the Agenda and Priorities Committee, and a third with Treasury Board.

"Then in the afternoon I'd be in several meetings with people from the public — for example, a county council group talking about waste management. Then I might have some time with deputy ministers. And in between all that are many phone calls."

The position "is more structured than where I came from," admits MacNichol, formerly Deputy Minister, Alberta Environment. "There I was

basically able to set the daily agenda and more my own boss."

That's not all that is different. MacNichol acknowledges that he inherits a vastly different set of circumstances than those experienced by predecessors, which will greatly affect his role. One of his tasks is to work on downsizing government.

"We'll have to do more with less," he says. "It's a challenge for all of us. Dealing with change is always difficult within a bureaucracy."

The new spirit of openness will present managers with a second challenge. "The best way to find out what is happening is to talk to the people who use the services," he says. "A good manager has to get out and talk to the people."

MacNichol himself has long been a proponent of an open-door policy that focuses on the public's needs. At Alberta Environment, he instituted a Total Quality Management program with the goal of providing the "customer" — read public — with the top "product" — read service.

Being a manager in the Alberta Public Service is "a very demanding job," says MacNichol, and it's not getting any easier. Not only do managers have to genuinely like people, they also have to lead by example, keeping up-to-date in their fields, adapting to change and finding cost-effective solutions to the challenges they face.

His advice to managers? "Set an example by explaining what you're all about and what your vision is to your own people. No one person has all the answers. Build a team."

Part of his management philosophy is to give others freedom in how they choose to achieve goals, once those goals have been articulated. "I know I don't like to have someone looking over my shoulder. I

like to get on with it."

MacNichol was born in the village of Black Lands, New Brunswick, and graduated as a civil engineer from the University of New Brunswick. He also studied political science with great interest. "To be candid, I've always been interested in politics."

He worked as a field engineer for the provincial highways department and on a large power project before joining the federal government's Department of Regional Economic Expansion in Ottawa in 1968. In 1977 he joined the Alberta government as Regional Director, Alberta Transportation, in Peace River, and later served as Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Transportation and Deputy Minister, Utilities and Telecommunications.

Has his engineering background helped him tunnel through bureaucracy? "Oh yes," he says. "It makes you think in a structured way."

In his spare time, MacNichol likes to golf, garden, cook for informal dinner parties and work on model trains. His radio is often tuned to K-97 but he is also a fan of ACCESS.

A self-acknowledged "people person," his ideal holiday is to spend unstructured time with family and friends. His wife, Nanette, is a nurse; his daughter Cynthia trained as a teacher and his son, Arthur, is an accountant.

He enjoys reading, especially history, and just completed *Country Power*, the story of rural electrification in Alberta.

A great admirer of the late John F. Kennedy, he praises the many Albertans who are committed to public service, who often work without recognition or reward.

"I admire people who do worthwhile things for society. Those are the kind of people I really respect." ▲

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Total Total Quality Management (TQM) has worked its way into the vocabulary of the Alberta Public Service. What is TQM? How has the Alberta government introduced it? What's next? These are some of the questions managers have asked over the last 18 months.

WHAT IS TQM?

TQM is a philosophy and a method to help organizations carry out their vision. It includes these principles.

- *Focusing on meeting and exceeding your customer's needs.* We all have customers, clients or consumers, internal or external to our organizations. The customer is the reason organizations exist. By meeting and exceeding their needs, organizations know they're doing the right things, and adding value along the way.

- *Involving employees and clients in making decisions.* There are several approaches for organizations, such as public involvement, consultation and teamwork. The prerequisites are trust and empowerment. TQM oriented organizations find involving clients and employees is critical to their success. Using collective brain power, creativity and innovation makes

improvements, reduces operating costs and satisfies customers.

- *Leaders in TQM organizations support, encourage and coach individuals and teams to meet customers' needs.* In TQM organizations executives, managers and supervisors play vital roles. But roles evolve over time from controlling employees to empowering them. As one Alberta government manager says: "A leader using the TQM philosophy doesn't let go of the reins but allows himself to share those reins with his employees".

- *Continuous improvement of processes that yield sustained results.* Inefficient processes and systems cause 85 to 95 per cent of all organizational problems. Employees working in those systems cause five to 15 per cent of problems. To improve, organizations have to take a critical look at their systems rather than blaming people. Asking the following questions may help:

"What value do these systems add to our customers?"
 "Are there better ways to serve our customers?"
 "What gets in the way of employees doing their work?"
 "How much waste, duplication and rework is generated by our systems?"

- *Recognizing individuals and teams on a regular basis promotes TQM as a valued activity.* Without recognition, the TQM fuel evaporates. Performance management approaches that focus solely on individuals and results neglect the fact that people work in teams, committees and projects. These approaches also forget that systems and processes are largely responsible for organizational results.

Many TQM organizations develop performance management approaches based on the organization's vision and mission, continuous improvement of processes, elimination of waste, customer service, teamwork, risk-taking, creativity, innovation, empowering leadership and sustained long-term results.

HOW HAS THE ALBERTA PUBLIC SERVICE INTRODUCED TQM?

Some departments have implemented various quality improvement initiatives over the last few years. The TQM concept was formally introduced to the Alberta government in March 1991 by the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, Fred Stewart. Mr. Stewart wrote to all Ministers, telling them of nine recommendations on TQM arising from the Premier's Council on Science and Technology. The recommendations encouraged the government to expand its role in advocating the implementation of TQM concepts.

In January 1992 a TQM Symposium introduced concepts on a wide scale to public service managers. The Personnel Administration Office developed a TQM Reference Guide for participants. In its fourth printing, more than 2,000 copies have been distributed on request.

In May 1992 a Quality Management Coordinator's Forum was established. Deputy Ministers nominated representatives from their departments to participate on the Forum. A representative from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees is a member. The Forum has met monthly since then.

The Personnel Administration Office developed a TQM course curriculum. Six courses have been in high demand since introduction in January of this year.

WHAT'S NEXT?

On May 4, 1993, TQM Symposium II will be held at the Edmonton Convention Centre. It's a follow-up to last year's TQM Symposium. It will focus on TQM concepts, application of the concepts, and discussions of successful implementations of TQM at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. **Premier Ralph Klein** will be a special guest speaker at the symposium during the lunch.

For more information or assistance on TQM, contact the Staff Development Division of the Personnel Administration Office at 427-8130 or 427-8536. ▲

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